

MONTHLY NOTES  
OF THE  
**Library Association**  
of the United Kingdom.

At the meeting on Friday, May 6, 1881, a paper will be read by Mr. RALPH RICHARDSON, W.S., a Curator of the Signet Library, "On the Rejection of the Library Acts by the Citizens of Edinburgh on the 8th February, 1881."

APRIL MONTHLY MEETING.

THE sixth Monthly Meeting of the fourth year of the Association was held at the London Institution, on Friday, April 1, 1881, at 8 p.m., Mr. B. R. WHEATLEY in the chair.

The minutes of the previous meeting having been read and confirmed, Mr. E. Augustus Petherick, who was proposed at the last meeting, was unanimously elected a member.

The following gentlemen were proposed for election by Mr. H. R. TEDDER, and will be balloted for at the next meeting:—Mr. W. Leighton, jun., 40, Brewer Street, Golden Square, and Mr. Edward Hailstone, Walton Hall, Yorkshire.

The following gentlemen, engaged in library administration, were reported as having joined the Association. By the TREASURER:—Mr. S. E. Thompson, Librarian, Free Public Library, Swansea; Rev. A. Gordon (Member of Library Committee), 5, Ceres Villas, Kingston-on-Thames; Mr. Alex. Webster Robertson, Assistant Librarian, University of Aberdeen; Mr. Herbert Griffith (Member of Library Committee, Oxford Union Society), Exeter College, Oxford. By the Rev. S. S. LEWIS, Local Secretary for Cambridge:—Mr. Robert Alexander Neil, Librarian, Pembroke College, Cambridge.

The SECRETARIES, by direction of the Council, laid before the meeting the following resolution of the local committee for the Birmingham district:—

"That the Free Libraries Bill, as it now stands, would, in the opinion of this Committee, seriously damage Free Libraries, and the amendments required are so numerous that its withdrawal is strongly urged."

The following circular, issued by Sir John Lubbock to the authorities of Free Public Libraries, was also laid before the meeting :—

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *March 26th*, 1881.

SIR,—At the commencement of the Session the Metropolitan Free Libraries Association forwarded me a Bill which they had prepared, and which had been approved by the Council of the Library Association.

I consulted Lord George Hamilton and Sir Charles Reed, and we consented to introduce the Bill, naturally supposing, under the circumstances, that we were acting in accordance with the wishes of those interested in Free Libraries.

At the same time, the subject being one of considerable difficulty, I expressly stated, in moving the second reading, that ample time would be given to consider the clauses before we asked the House of Commons to consider the Bill in Committee.

I now understand that the Mayor of Manchester has summoned a Conference, at which a resolution was passed adverse to the Bill, though no opportunity was afforded us to explain our views, or to indicate the amendments which we intended to propose in Committee.

If we had had the opportunity of attending the Conference, I do not believe that any resolution against the Bill would have been adopted.

At present the further progress of the Bill is blocked by Mr. Warton, but we propose, if possible, to get the Bill through the second reading and commit it *pro forma*, so as to have it reprinted with the amendments. We will then send you a copy, and shall be very glad of any further suggestions with which you may be disposed to favour us, and which we will carefully consider before the Bill goes through Committee.

I understand that you have been requested to petition against our Bill, but I trust that you will not do so, as I believe we shall be able to adopt the main amendments which have been suggested, and that the Bill will prove a useful measure.

Before passing the Bill through Committee we shall give ample time for consideration, and I will only add, in conclusion, that we have no desire to press the Bill unless with the approval of those concerned in the management of Free Libraries.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN LUBBOCK.

The CHAIRMAN then called upon Mr. W. BRACE to read his paper on

#### F. A. EBERT'S VIEW OF A LIBRARIAN'S EDUCATION.

MR. BRACE said: Friedrich Adolf Ebert is so well known as a bibliographer that I need say little about him. He was born in 1791, and died 1834. In 1806 he was appointed assistant librarian to the town library of Leipsic, which he soon left to pursue his studies at the University. In 1813 he was appointed librarian to the town library of Leipsic, and in 1814 became secretary to the royal public library at Dresden. In 1820 he published an edition of thirty-eight copies of a little treatise on the education of the librarian, and a second enlarged edition,\* extending to sixty-eight octavo pages, in the same year. I am not aware of any English translation. This little treatise is often referred to, and contains so much useful matter that it appears to me to be well worthy of

\* Die Bildung des Bibliothekars. Von Friedrich Adolf Ebert, Doctor der Philosophie und Secrétaire der Königl. öffentl. Bibliotheken zu Dresden. Zweite ungarbearbeitete Ausgabe. Leipzig, 1820. 8vo, pp. 68.

our attention at a time when the Association has this subject under consideration.

It is curious to remark the difference between Ebert's estimate of the librarian's office and that prevailing in America and England at the present day. He says:—"The librarian of modern times holds a different position from that of his predecessors, and one which will afford him but little satisfaction. With the altered spirit of study, and the more prevailing inclination towards independent research and freedom of investigation ; with the general endeavour to work out individually what was formerly only treated of collectively ; and lastly, with the appearance of so large a number of literary works, he has ceased to be that oracle for old and young that he formerly was. . . . The labours of the librarian now relate more to posterity, for whom he must be a faithful and intelligent depository ; his intercourse with the present is in general merely mechanical. It is for posterity that he collects from his own and former times all that, on mature consideration, he considers worth collecting, and for posterity he arranges what he has collected, according to principles which it alone can maintain. We must not hide from ourselves the fact that it requires no little courage to sow and care for the seed of which we shall never see the joyful harvest ; and that it demands great self-denial to refrain from productions of our own, that we may laboriously, and in silent obscurity, prepare for future works of others whom we know not."

Our author then begins by setting up a tolerably high standard of what is to be required of the intending student. He says that ability to fulfil the duties of his calling depends with the librarian, as with everyone else, upon thorough preparatory knowledge—the difference between him and scholars in other departments of learning is that this preparatory knowledge must be as wide and varied as possible. No scholar can dispense with a thorough study of the Greek and Latin languages ; the librarian must also thoroughly understand French, Italian, and English, and as to the other western languages he must have the power of supplying present needs with the aid of a good grammar and lexicon. Oriental languages are not so much required ; they possess peculiar difficulties and are less frequently needed, although some knowledge of Hebrew, which is not so difficult, will be of great use to him. Moreover, an earnest and thorough study of history is indispensable, seeing that his office is entirely historical. He who works for the future must in a certain manner stand above the present, and although always attentive to appearances in the present, he must never allow himself to be drawn aside from his course, nor permit his judgment to be influenced by local or temporary partiality.

A most important part of these preparatory studies is that relating to the history of literature and bibliography, with both of which the whole work of the librarian is connected, and by which it is influenced, so that he must possess a more than usual knowledge of them. The same is the case with diplomatics, so far as it relates to the handwriting of manuscripts. He will seldom have an oppor-

tunity of acquiring a practical knowledge of this last before entering upon his duties, but it is necessary that he bring a good theoretical groundwork. Some knowledge of art, at least so far as relates to copper-plate and wood engraving, and especially the archæology thereof, becomes every year more necessary to the librarian. Lastly, he must limit the circle of his studies with the encyclopædia; not that he may vainly and self-complacently chatter about everything, "from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," but that he may attain that equality of respect and interest for each branch of human knowledge, without which he will be guilty of the most awkward onesidedness in collecting; and may acquire that thorough knowledge of the state, divisions, boundaries, and manifold points of contact of the different sciences, which he hourly needs in the work of arrangement.

Of the natural gifts which he must possess, it will suffice to mention a good memory. Indispensable as is an accurate and retentive memory for titles, names, and numbers, a trustworthy memory for place is even more so. The librarian who is always obliged to refer to his catalogue to find what he wants is a man sincerely to be pitied. Equally necessary is a good, clear, and swift handwriting; and the knowledge and practice of some mechanical arts are not to be despised. In large libraries, as in small, he will often be spared vexatious delay and trouble of many kinds if he has learned to help himself. He who, for every loose leaf or insecure or misplaced shelf, is obliged to call in the binder or carpenter, will often find his work unpleasantly interrupted; not to mention the disadvantage to him of an ignorance of such matters, when the workmen must labour under his supervision, and partly also according to his instructions.

This is enough to make one exclaim, nearly in the words of Rasselas, "Thou hast persuaded me that no human being can ever be a librarian." But it is not all; for he proceeds to say that all this knowledge and aptitude secure no more than the possibility of becoming an efficient librarian. They are merely *præcognoscenda*; and just as the jurist, after a thorough academical training, is not yet a good practical lawyer, so this knowledge produces no more than a good and sufficient literary man. With all his literary knowledge, he may be unfit to carry on his own business!

In marking out a course of study, our author begins by dismissing the writers on library science as distinctly to be avoided, and charges them with falling into the errors of mechanical practice on the one hand, and over-fine theorising on the other. This may have been true sixty years ago, but to show that it is not so now, it will be sufficient to mention Petzholdt's "*Katechismus der Bibliothekenlehre*," and the later English and American writings on the subject. Passing over such works, our author advises his student to confine himself to the study of the arrangement of good catalogues. I omit many of the catalogues to which he refers, retaining only the most important. He begins by recommending Francke's Catalogue of the Bübau Library and Audiffredi's

Catalogue of the Casanate Library—the former as a pattern of a subject catalogue, the latter as that of an author catalogue; each unsurpassed in its kind, and perhaps unsurpassable. In these the student will see how titles should be copied, and what exactitude must be observed, even to the smallest detail, and will learn what to extract for each kind of catalogue, and how; and also the arrangement which each kind of catalogue requires. In this study he is to begin with Audiffredi, and when he has thoroughly learned what is wanted in an author catalogue, especially in the entry of anonymous and pseudonymous works, he may go to Francke's subject catalogue. If he has so studied both that he clearly understands the principles adopted in their construction, he can proceed to compare them with other catalogues, and will, for the first time, fully learn the excellence of these masters by comparison with their contraries. When he has learned to distinguish wherein these catalogues differ, and can form a well-founded judgment as to the worth or worthlessness of each, he is to proceed to the difficult task of comparing several subject catalogues, beginning with the catalogues of his own country, and then taking in hand the classified catalogues of other nations, seeking out the principles of classification peculiar to each nation, comparing them with the principles obtaining in his own, and attempting to form an independent judgment upon them. From these general catalogues he is to go on to those which contain rich collections in particular branches, and examine their classification. Thus prepared, he is to proceed to attempts of his own by copying on separate slips the titles of books in different but special subjects which appear in all these catalogues, mixing them together and re-arranging them according to his own ideas, and then observing how these books are arranged in those catalogues. Having practised this until he knows how to deal with works on special subjects, and those which run into more than one subject, he is to try to form a clear conception of his principles of classification and their systematic development. In doing this, he must observe what features in this or that catalogue are nationally, locally, or individually peculiar and liable to change with alteration of time or place. If we keep in view the historical character of libraries at the present day, and bear in mind that they are not, as formerly, institutions designed to act directly upon the life of the present, as schools and universities do, but are now become scientific repositories for future generations, it is self-evident that their organisation must not be conditioned and ruled merely by the existing wants of the day, but be so contrived that our successors, with systems of their own, may be able easily to find everything and to carry out our plan. After this general preparation, the student is advised to proceed to special subjects, and learn from good models how incunabula, copperplate or wood engravings, and choice copies, should be catalogued and described, and to this add some practice. He is also recommended to make himself acquainted with the French, English, and Italian bibliographical terms of art; to learn, for example, that *réclames*,

*richiami*, and *catchwords* denote the German *Custoden*; *pontuseaux* or *watermarks*, *Wassermarke*; that the *registre* of the French is neither *Inhaltsverzeichnis* (table of contents), nor *Register* (alphabetical index), both of which are indiscriminately called *table*, but the signature, *registrum chartarum*, of old printing; nor, it may be added, is it the same as the English *register*.

He is also to make himself well acquainted with the Bandini catalogue of MSS., as a masterpiece of its kind, and a worthy collateral to Francke and Audiffredi. From this he is to proceed to greater and bolder attempts, in classifying and arranging his own collection of books or other private collections. Here he will find that the difference of size hinders books from being placed in exactly the same order as they occupy in a well-arranged catalogue, and will then fully feel the need of a shelf-list. But he must not be led to the notion that the shelving is to be regulated by a different principle from that which was followed in the arrangement of the catalogue. The only difference is that the same system has to be carried out in each size with a few slight modifications, and this is easily done by making only three sizes, and not separating the octavos from those which are not very different, as with French books. Attentive reading of descriptions of libraries, and frequent visits to the libraries of his neighbourhood, complete the preparatory education. His attention is principally directed to the placing of the books and minor details, and reckoning up the most advantageous way of using a given space.

When appointed he is to begin by making himself acquainted with the present organisation of his library, and carefully study its history, examining the old and superseded catalogues, and wherein they differ from the present plan, and make himself familiar with the handwriting of his predecessors and former possessors of purchased collections, until from outward signs, as old shelf-marks, manuscript notes, binding, or other peculiarities, he can at once tell from what source this or that book came. The importance of this is enforced by showing that it is only in this way that he can acquire an accurate memory and practical turn of mind, and be secure against that disposition to hasty alteration which is especially injurious in a library. Special attention is to be given to the arrangement of the library, and noting what presses or rooms are not usefully occupied. Experience only can teach how much space can be gained by judicious rearrangement. In such attempts he must know how to handle books with dexterity, and must not fear the trouble of re-arranging the same press or room several times until he has attained his purpose. On these accounts it is necessary that he should carry out the principal part of the work himself, and only call in the aid of attendants in individual cases. When thus acquainted with his library and its alterations, he may take up treatises of library science, and compare theory and practice. He will now have passed beyond the instructions of others, and may fairly take up the clue where his predecessor left off, and carry it further.



I pass over several other points of library management which are ably dealt with in this little treatise, but are not necessarily connected with the subject of this paper. One piece of advice to the newly-appointed librarian is worth recording, and is the last passage to which I shall refer. "Let him not undertake either total or partial alterations with a self-satisfied and unfavourable prepossession against the work of earlier times. Let him seek out its good points, and try whether its deficiencies may not be supplied without an alteration of the whole. But if a thoroughly radical reform is undertaken, let him sketch out a detailed and well-considered plan, in accordance with which the work may be carried out in sections, so that the parts which are not immediately under alteration may be kept in working order. A library which already has a definite arrangement ought not to be entirely inaccessible for a single day, even during the most thoroughgoing re-arrangement."

Although the remarks on the historical character of the librarian's office do not fully apply to our modern popular libraries, yet they have a bearing upon them which is often overlooked. Few libraries are burdened with superfluous funds, and as every purchase of a needless book keeps out a needful one, it is important that, in supplying the wants of the present day, care should be taken to avoid overloading the shelves with purely ephemeral matter, only valuable for its novelty and soon superseded, to the exclusion of more needful modern works. I know that this has been the case with some libraries, but am unable to judge how far the evil extends. The observations on the danger of hasty re-arrangement fall more within the range of my experience. Coleridge's maxim, "Until you understand a writer's ignorance, presume yourself ignorant of his understanding," will apply to librarians as well as to authors. With books, and especially with MSS. and documents, it is always worth taking pains to find out how they came into the order in which they are found; and until this is known, however illogical that arrangement may appear, it should not unadvisedly be disturbed. The finding of two MSS. together will sometimes lead to the discovery of an important and unsuspected connection between their subjects, or of the fact that they were at one time wrongly thought to be connected. Hasty re-arrangement will often destroy the chance of making many such discoveries.

In conclusion, I wish to call attention to the practical character of Ebert's requirements. It is hardly to be hoped that many persons could be found with all the qualifications and acquirements enumerated by him, but it will be seen that they include some humble but very necessary qualifications which are frequently overlooked, and that the difference between the ideal and the attainable is one of degree and not of kind. For example, knowledge of languages is necessary, but for an assistant it may be sufficient if at the beginning he knows enough to copy a title correctly; and a general knowledge of science and literature,

though superficial, will be much more useful than a mere acquaintance with *à priori* systems of classification, without any practical experience of their working. A good memory for places, legible handwriting, and general mechanical dexterity are also important, and frequently overlooked in discussions on this subject.

It would not be difficult to find many persons with considerable pretensions to literary acquirements who, by their awkwardness in handling books and inability to remember their places, would be a hindrance rather than a help in a library, whose slow or illegible writing would render their assistance anything but desirable in preparation of catalogues, statistics, and reports, and whose want of skill in the mechanical part of their work would cause increase of injury to the books rather than prevent it. Many other of Ebert's suggestions appear to me to be capable of adoption with advantage; for example, it would be well if we were to make known what are the best printed catalogues of each kind, that library authorities, in ordering the preparation of new catalogues, may see how such work has been done and ought to be done, and those about to make them may know where to find good patterns and may judge of different kinds of catalogues from the best specimens of each.

DISCUSSION.—Mr. TEDDER considered that business habits and capacity were most important points. A librarian should, above all things, be a man of business. He wished to take this opportunity of protesting against the misuse of the saying, "The librarian who reads is lost." This had been so constantly misrepresented and misunderstood that the author must regret that he ever wrote it.—The CHAIRMAN said that some of his most valuable knowledge had been acquired in looking through books in the course of his work. There was now little opportunity of reading books through.—Mr. WELCH said that if a librarian did not make himself acquainted with the contents of the books, he would be unable to give that information to readers which they constantly demanded, and which it formed an important part of his duties to supply.—After some further discussion, a vote of thanks was given to Mr. BRACE for his paper.

The reading of Mr. RICHARDSON'S paper was adjourned until the next monthly meeting.

#### ANSWER TO QUERY.

Whitaker's edition of "Visio Willi de Petro Ploughman," 1813, 4to.—Pp. 265-6 are absent from the copy in the Mitchell Library. It appears from the text and the paraphrase to be a typographical error, but is not named in the page of errata. Signatures Ll and Mm have each four leaves.

F. T. B.

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